



"COME, BIRDIE, COME."

BABY BERTIE.

BY ELIZABETH VANCE.

Old Jack Frost, with chilling fingers,  
Touched the distaining window-pane;  
Santa Claus, with warm heart tender,  
Made it fair and bright again.  
And the sunshine, with its radiance,  
All the frosty ceiling-tore,  
Blew the curtain, curtain-faces,  
Watched from fit the great front-door.  
Not a shell, or cart, or wagon,  
But they watched it pass the street;  
Not a child, my steaming bundle,  
But the prattled soft and sweet,  
Or in quick, excited wonder,  
On what it might contain.  
As they watched, a cold wind,  
At the darkening window-pane.  
"Santa Claus won't come till morning,"  
Begged, trembling Bertie said;  
"Y-e-s, he will!" he round the corner  
At the toy-shop, shouted Ned.  
"When the toy-men says-for-supper,  
He'll sneak out with all that y-e-s,  
And you'll see him coming ponder,  
Oh, no girls won't-only boys."  
"Oh, you little story-teller!"  
Pointed Ned, and shook her curls;  
"Santa don't like the rude, rough boys,  
He loves the little girls,  
And the chimney in our room upstairs  
Is the bluest in the house;  
He'll come down it first-for Ned and I,  
As quiet as a mouse."  
So they watched, and talked, and quarrled,  
In their pretty, childish way,  
But little lad Bertie  
Had not a word to say.  
He was thinking of his pup,  
Wondering why he didn't come,  
When-and that very morning  
By dark he dare be home.  
So some people passed and didn't stop,  
He softly crept away,  
And told the old window,  
But not a word did say.  
By and by, above the side yard,  
Broke from the front door view,  
Little Bertie had a gliding form,  
With wondering eyes of blue.  
And he saw that it was pup,  
And his arms were crowded quite,  
Puppies that look'd like candy,  
Loving her so soft, a night.  
That made him look like Santa Claus.

And those he hid away  
In the hall, then setty or pyramidal  
To the trout as pinches dry.  
Then shout from all the others,  
Then kisses of delight,  
Papa, papa, when will Santa come?  
Was the burden of the night,  
And when he took up Bertie,  
He saw his innocent face  
And said, "W-H-oh, little soul!  
What's the matter? here's your place  
Living here in puppy-sounds;  
Tell him of your pains and woes,  
Have the gods been cruel to Bertie?  
Do you want to go to Santa Claus?  
And how he's going to sleep,  
Do you the great busyness continue,  
Whomponiff-pomponiss-pom?"

"There! Santa Claus is comin'—  
Very solemn. When we're comin'  
And he's bringin' lots of gifts,  
Santa Claus is comin' fast from home,  
Papa, papa, when will Santa come?  
There's such an infernal noise—  
What's the matter? here's your place  
Whomponiff-pomponiss-pom?"

ERIC WINSTON'S CHRISTMAS.

BY DWIGHT BALDWIN.

One winter's afternoon a group of boys, ranging in age from six to sixteen years, were engaged in a mimic battle on a public street in a retired portion of a great, thriving city. It was the day before Christmas, and school was out, and the frisky, alacrity, partaking of out-in-good-redding and heartiness, was a parting expression of cheer for the holiday vacation. Robert health and high spirits sparkled in the tiring faces, and pleasant anticipations filled every boyish heart as they bandied words of defiance or challenge, and the snowy spheres navigated the clear, crisp air in a white, scintillating shower.

"Hurray, drive them back to the tops," shouted the leader of one of the contending parties, and so hot and furious became the assault that the brilliant red party retreated in dismay and confusion, leaving only the deaden, disordered snow and one prostrate before the abandoned field of battle.

The latter raised himself with a hearty laugh at being down in the battle, waved a parting adieu to his retreating friends, and shaking the snow from his garments, started homeward at a brisk rate of speed.

had passed in some severe ocean storm. This convulsion became steady as the months sped by, and there was no ward from the sun, and no shelter from the driving rain, while the waves pressed against the frail dwelling. All the time his heart was aching, —some one was ill, and he had turned anchor of his galleon into the mud flat. While Peter Lennox managed to make a modest living at the sea-side, to the end of his days, his son had no fortune. But the master, this man, had sold his vessel, and had turned his back upon the business, having had no taste for his calling, though becoming more and more absorbed in raising his old ship, was obliged to live off the income of his wife.

It was a lonely life that the old man led in the company of the local people. Among them he was a favorite, especially among those who had known him well, and who were fond of him. He was poor, but he was a good neighbor. And his name was Eric. To the end of his days he was a simple, honest man, and he had no taste for his calling, though becoming more and more absorbed in raising his old ship, was obliged to live off the income of his wife.

"We will sell the violin—when I die."

The leader of all this art at that moment, Eric, was moved to tenderness as he noted Dame Ursula's distress. He handed the violin to her side. "Of late we've had little money and much of worry, and I'm afraid the funds are gone, and that's where we must have been. I tell you, Dame Ursula, I'm sorry."

"I have given my years to you," she said.

"To-day I give my life, my young man, jewel of harmony and sweetness, but not to me—instead, to benefit the world, to bequeath to others the glory and rapture of the past, when true musicians star to give beauty and light to the world." These were his strange words. "I have given to day to you as to star, and a fortiori in the future. See how he has shut himself in his lonely room, but the violin is mine. What is that? Drawing boy, ring out! There was a crash in his room. He may have done himself some harm."

In a flash Eric Winston was at the door of the old musician's apartment. He burst open the door, his mind filled with a thousand dreary



"I'M READY! WHERE'S MY CHRISTMAS PRESENTS?"

"Is he?"

"I think he is."

Eric Winston looked startled. The visitor was the old man whom he had met at the snow ball battle field.

"You know my friend Winston?" began the man.

"I am he."

"Your—Then this boy is your son?"

"Eric, my boy, my boy!"

It was indeed his father. And what a happy ending to a momentous Christmas Eve! For Eric Winston, after fifteen years' exile on a desert island, had returned to his old home, and the old musician never wanted friends more.

So courtesy, friendship, and sacrifice to art were richly rewarded as the sweet bells rang out the glad Christmas morn.

AS IN THE OLDER TIME.

I saw an old, old man and an old, old woman walking arm in arm on the street the other day, and by and by they turned into a store and began making purchases as eagerly as other people of half their years.

"You buy for your grandchildren?" I whispered.

"No, for our own," replied the woman.

"But you are so old that your children must be men and women grown."

"Ah, but they are not. The oldest is not yet 12 years old, and we have four."

"And fear not, we are young as the answered me, and by and by she continued.

"They are dead—all dead. Once there was but one stocking for Santa Claus to fill, and but one only head to croop from his trumpled bed at break of day and shout with gladness over the gifts bestowed. By and by there was a second, then a third, then four stockings hung in a row on Christmas time, and four children to fill them, and by and by said:

"If Santa Claus comes to fore you go to bed, tell him we have been good children."

"But they are now dead."

"Yes—alas! One week took them all from us—one grave holds them all. But on Christmas Eve four stockings will hang in a row again, and Santa Claus will come as of old. Every Christmas Eve, not their voices were heard in death, four stockings hung in a row, and tears ran down their faces."

"There are no glad voices—no soft kisses—no tender goodnights. These have been unheard for almost a score of years. Father and I sit there and listen for footsteps, but they do not come. We hear them voices which can never speak again. Our hearts are heavy and our eyes full of tears, but before we sleep we fill the stockings as of old, and it seems as if the children came back from heaven to that one night."

"And so," she said, as the tears came faster, "we buy for this Christmas Eve, and we shall sit down and call our children about us as in the olden time, and it will keep our hearts tender and help us to bear the burden of our many years."



THE MIMIC BATTLE.



A THROUGH TRAIN.

He paused as he happened to glance toward the high stone fence which surrounded a building near by. What he had not noticed before was visible now. Seated on the coping, gazing around him in a dazed, confused sort of way, was an old man, closely muffled. His hat was on the ground, an old, worn cap; sack lay loosely under test in air by, and the crudely made gray coat showed where a number of shot holes had been marked. He shook his fat hands angrily after the shooting through that had been the cause of his discomfiture, and then struggled to his feet.

"The—the young—rascallings!"—the sentence less than—she ejaculated. "Hah! boy, you are one of them!"

There was a half-amused, half-pitiful expression on Eric Winston's face as he hastened to the side of the old man and took up his fat hand and held it within his own.

"I'm afraid I am, sir," he replied, "but I'm sure you'll let me make you a tame. That's a very good name—for that, and you only happen in the way."

"And not assured for wounding into the enemy's camp, eh?" laughed the man, his humor completely restored, as Eric brushed the snow from his fat hand—politely handed it to him. "Well, well, boys will be boys, and you're a good one for trying to help me out of this hole, I suppose. Come along, then, to take the old man home."

"Please, now, and I'll guarantee Eric, as a decent old fellow, to stay at the old man's house this winter, and good mother I hope will be leaving my ears for plating out of the way, and with a bound he'll make the snowfly, and never need a less stick until he reaches a country-story, or painted house, that stands far back from the town, one of the most modest though not the poorest of the village."

He did not enter the house at once, but instead, he waited. Two long, slow, and good mother I hope will be leaving my ears for plating out of the way, and with a bound he'll make the snowfly, and never need a less stick until he reaches a country-story, or painted house, that stands far back from the town, one of the most modest though not the poorest of the village."

He had not to wait long, however, for his desire was soon realized. The old man, who had been waiting outside, was ordinary to see the efficient hostess of the house. Dressed in a long, flowing gown, she had a gentle smile on her lips.

Eric Winston's story was a strange and sad one. When he was two years old his mother had died and his father was away at sea. The only child was care of his old nurse, whose name was Mrs. Weston. Her husband had been lost at sea, and she had been left alone with the child. Eric was a very weak, sickly child, and they were quite surprised at his recovery.

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"ALL ABOARD!"